OUR FAITH

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Purpose:--"*To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man.*"

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Prayer

O God of Life, we thank thee for beautiful little things which we never dreamed could make us so happy, and for the way the stars shone on long hard stretches of the road we had to tread. We thank thee for the small expectations which ended in great delight; for the visitations of friendship which took us by surprise in this quarreling world of ours, and for the success which startled a heart schooled to face frequent defeat. We thank thee that when we prayed for courage to face the worst, there was often the infinite mercy of so much less than the worst; and we thank thee that some of our desires were not satisfied because a wisdom deeper than our own withheld what we wanted for the moment and gave us what we needed for ever. We bless thee that, bereft of some things we felt we could not live without, we have had bestowed upon us other things to enable us to live on—a vision in the restless night, a quiet heart in the dreaded tumult, an inspiring thought when we were at our wits' end, a sufficient grace in spite of our weakness. We praise thee for that within us which, bloody and also bowed, has not been utterly conquered and never shall be, because those who love us make us continually ashamed of lying in the dust. Bless our future days to courage in our own troubles and kindness in the troubles of others. Bless our work to a little splendor and our homes to great loving. Bless our country to responsible freedom and our world to new hope. Forgive our sins against thee and against one another; and lead us gently down the years, out of the good that is into the better that is yet to be. For Christ's Sake. Amen.

Beyond My Will

Faith is in no sense a substitute for knowledge and responsibility. It is rather a stimulus to their utmost development and extension. But in their utmost development and extension it is still the key to their meaning. For in the end, amid all of this amplification, we come back, as men, to the central question of our manhood and civilization: Is there beyond our faltering and flickering human wills, a creative spirit of perfect justice, of understanding and compassionate love?

Men who believe in the existence of such a spirit, conceived as the cosmic demand of a cosmic power, have found in it one of the deepest forces of life. It searches and purifies their hearts, minds and wills; sustains their strength; gives peace in hardship, suffering, tragedy and loss, for the only unredeemable tragedy is evil which falls on a base mind; gathers men and peoples into that more inclusive and dynamic union of justice, peace and mutual fulfillment which all men now so deeply need and for which we all so fervently pray.

This is the faith which sustains the summit minds and spirits of this world, and to which we should all be reconsecrated now in personal life and in society. It is the holy function of our church to cultivate and nurture this faith and our reconsecration to it.

LESLIE T. PENNINGTON
(Minister, First Unitarian Church, Chicago, Ill.)

The Leadership of Jesus

Humanists differ from theists in emphasis on the place of the personality of Jesus in religion. In their desire to unite all man-

kind in an ideal democratic social order, humanists are fearful that to uphold Jesus as the supreme ideal of personality is to shut out many non-Christians from their social order kingdom. They do not speak any longer—as do the theists—of Jesus' idea of the Kingdom of God. They contend, that to use Jesus' plan or personality is to discourage non-Christians from supporting world-wide brotherhood and democracy. Their rallying point is not about one, traditional pattern of personality. They proclaim the greatness of certain sociological ideas, such as the promulgation of new truth, democratic human relations, and all-inclusive brotherhood, and loyalty in a united world order.

Excellent! Those are needs proclaimed by the theists also. How shall we proclaim them? Through some vehicle, yes! Through many liberal voices, yes! And through whatever agencies man can provide! But, where was there ever a voice that proclaimed them all like that of Jesus? Not one of these social ideals set forth above was overlooked in the teachings of Jesus! Only the organization, the method, and technique of his day need be improved upon—not the voice.

And some of our modernists and humanists would let Christianity lose its power! For twenty centuries religious emphasis on the gospel of Christianity has been transforming lives, families, communities and the world. That gospel has a far better future than the new systems of thought which tend to uproot it. Why? Because the institution, the church, has rallied around the personality of Jesus, who knew the worth of man as fully as the humanist who extols Man above God. Jesus had the revelation of soul as well as mind and **sensed** the ever present need of dependence upon God. As a humanist Jesus exalted his own ego when he used the first personal pronoun "I." "It hath been said by them of old . . . but **I** say unto you." Jesus was conscious of his own significance but his consciousness was **relational.** It was related to a sense of spiritual direction, a feeling of divine motivation and commission, an awareness that his life was but in the process of serving the Eternal Purpose. His was not an attachment to Man alone but to the Father of Mankind, also.

Right now, in this era of scientific progress and the extension of social and religious movements, let us not make haste to deny religion's greatest personality and the **proven** Christian traditions merely to satisfy the passion for doing something new on a grander scale. The tree will not produce better fruit by cutting off the roots, although certain thinning in the crown growth will aid in better production. The religious nurture of the world will not be made more fruitful by hacking at the roots of Christianity—God and the personality of Jesus. We must not let either dependence on God or Jesus' personality die or be belittled in the leadership of our churches. In them individual lives will be nobly lived and the world regenerated in democracy, brotherhood, and peace.

CARL A. SEAWARD

(Minister-Director of Christ Church and the Barnard Memorial School, Dorchester, Mass.)

A Religion With a Cross

Just last fall at a Boston hospital I was given the task of talking with a man whose only child had just died of a dread disease. It came upon her unexpectedly after an early life of perfect health, and she died in fearful agony. Hour after hour this man had sat beside her bed, suffering every pain with his beloved daughter, till he told me that in his very body he felt her physical pain. . . . Could I tell a man like that that there is no cross in the world, no evil, no pain . . . that it was all in his imagination, all a state of mind? If I had said that he would have had good cause to throw me out of the consultation room and say, "You stony-hearted idiot, you have never suffered yourself, and you have no right to bring your silly cheerfulness intruding upon real human grief." . . . The world is full of what I prefer to call self-hypnotized religion which seeks a cheerful spirit at the expense of all other things, including an honest facing of the facts. A generation which wishes for a religion without tears must find it difficult to adjust its beliefs to the teachings of the New Testament and the facts of life.

Christianity is many things. It is a philosophy of life. It is a way to make a new world. It is a life of supreme adventure and profound joy. We need to remind our-

selves that it is also the message of a consecrated cross to bear. We love the serene and Galilee parts of the Gospel, the graciousness and poetry and infinite tenderness of Jesus. But we are repelled by the grim Jerusalem-parts-of-it . . . the blood and the hate and the sacrifice. Our religion is based on the life of a leader who was crucified. If we can't stand it, we want a smiling successful Jesus, we must make a Jesus for ourselves, for the one in the Gospels is not after that fashion. If we seek a religion without a cross, and a cross for millions of us to take up and carry daily, then in literal truth we cannot be disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

CLAYTON BROOKS HALE
(Minister, Channing Unitarian Church, Rockland, Mass.)

A Layman's Letter

(We reproduce below a portion of a letter which was written by a member of the First Parish, Milton, Mass., Dr. Alexander Forbes of the Harvard Medical School. It was a reply to an invitation to join in the formation of a Boston branch of the American Humanist Association. It is beautiful evidence of the real faith among our Unitarian laymen, and was first printed in the Milton Calendar).

"To me the ideal religion centers in the reverent worship of something greater than Man. The grandeur, beauty and orderliness of the universe, and especially the deep-rooted tendency in all life to aspire and progress, convey the conviction of a spirit of goodness pervading the universe with a forward trend or purpose. It is too great for any men to comprehend fully, and each thinker sees it in his own individual way; but in recognizing it with reverence, and in thinking of it as something very real which we call God, we arrive at a form of worship that affords strength, courage and hope in a way that a cold and purely rational appraisal of human ethics cannot do. Most people find it helpful to personify the Deity in the emotional approach, whether or not they recognize intellectually that it is childish to suppose there is anything like a human being listening to their prayers. I don't think there is anything inconsistent between a warm personal feeling and a belief in God as the more abstract principle of law and progress."

Lincoln and Providence

Abraham Lincoln said, "I have had so many evidences of the Almighty's direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I can have no doubt that this power comes from above. . . . I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it. I am confident that it is His desire to restore the Union. He will do it, in His own good time."

In this statement Lincoln expresses his conviction that might well constitute the basis for a modern belief in Providence. He declares that God or Providence directly influences human affairs. He also declares that it does so, not by upsetting the physical laws of nature, but by influencing human minds.

We have today a considerable amount of scientific opinion backing up a belief in a Providential activity such as Lincoln saw it. Lecomte du Nouy, in his recent book "Human Destiny," takes the attitude that the origin of life and the course of evolution can, on the basis of cold scientific computation, not possibly be ascribed to chance, but must be ascribed to some sort of a trial-and-error movement tending toward a goal. This goal is the evolution of a human being who rises above the animal stage and develops not merely a consciousness but a conscience, i. e., an intuitional prompting urging him to unfold and act in a manner set by a cosmic Intelligence.

Du Nouy's position is similar to that expressed by various scientifically oriented modern philosophers such as Whitehead, Montague, and Avey. W. T. Stace, another empirical philosopher, says: "God influences the world. . . . His power is incalculably great. We may believe that he battles for the right, that he fights along with us as our captain against evil, that he is the helper, lover, and refuge of men."

For Unitarians, a very conservative statement of this kind by Emerson should be of interest. Emerson, of course, felt that every man had God in his own soul, and could there approach him. But of all humanity he said: "The genius which preserves and guides the human race indicates itself by a small excess of good, a small balance in brute facts always favorable to the side of reason."

That is to say, there is a pattern unfold-

ing itself in human evolution which gradually, by slow stages, moves the race in the direction of the divine ideal. The individuals, often few in number, through whom the small advances are made, are, as du Nouy emphasizes, the true bearers of human destiny. They are the very tools of Providence.

CARL A. NORMAN
(Professor of Engineering, Ohio State University)

Lecomte du Nouy Says:

"If we have read the signs of the times correctly, or even if we have exaggerated some of the symptoms, the only salvation for mankind will be found in religion.

"However, it must be a sound Christian religion, vitalized by its own primitive ideals, aware of the progress of science, rid of prejudice against fair speculative intelligence, and soaring high above frontiers.

"Never in her two thousand years has the Church had a more urgent call and a nobler opportunity to fulfill her obligation as the comforter and guide of humanity."

(From "Human Destiny" p. 264)

True Religion

"We are told that traditional Christianity and 'liberal' Christianity are not two aspects of the same religion. But it happens that they are! Such a statement belies the whole history of the Christian religion, which is the slow but sure development of traditional dogmas toward a more rational interpretation of their great verities in the light of increasing knowledge. True religion is dynamic, not static. Liberal Christianity is the logical and inevitable outgrowth of the ancient creeds. It seeks not to destroy, but to fulfill. And in this Liberal Christianity follows the temper and the spirit of the Man of Galilee. The present job of liberals is to get intelligent Christians to think."

JAY WILLIAM HUDSON

(In the Beacon Press Book, "Religious Liberals Reply")

A Holy Week Meditation

Children then of nature, we are also sons of God; born of the genial earth, we are to climb the glorious heaven; and to the human lot that makes us of one blood with Adam, is added the divine liberty of being of one spirit with Christ. That liberty we cannot decline, for we are conscious of it now; and if we look not on it as on the face of an angel, it will haunt us with its gaze like the eye of a fiend. The severe prerogatives of an existence half-divine are ours. To wear away life in unproductive harmlessness is innocent no more: with the glory we take the cross; and, instead of slumbering at noon in Eden, must keep the midnight watch within Gethsemane. We, too, like our great leader, must be made perfect through suffering; but the struggle by night will bring the calmness of the morning; the hour of exceeding sorrow will prepare the day of godlike strength; the prayer for deliverance calls down the power of endurance. And while to the reluctant their cross is too heavy to be borne, it grows light to the heart of willing trust. The faithful heirs of "the man of sorrows," transcending the trials they cannot decline, may quit the world with the cry, "It is finished," and pass through the silence of death to the peace of God.

JAMES MARTINEAU

The Omnipresence of God

All nature is a book on which one lesson is written and blessed are the eyes that can read it. On the glorious sky it is writ in characters of fire; on earth it is writ in the majesty of the green ocean; it is writ on the volcanoes of the south, and the icebergs of the polar sea; on the storm, in winter; in summer on every trembling leaf; on man in the motion of the limbs, and the changing expression of the face, in all his dealings, in all his language it is seen and may be read and pondered and practised in all. This lesson is the omnipresence of God—the presence of a love that is tender and boundless.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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